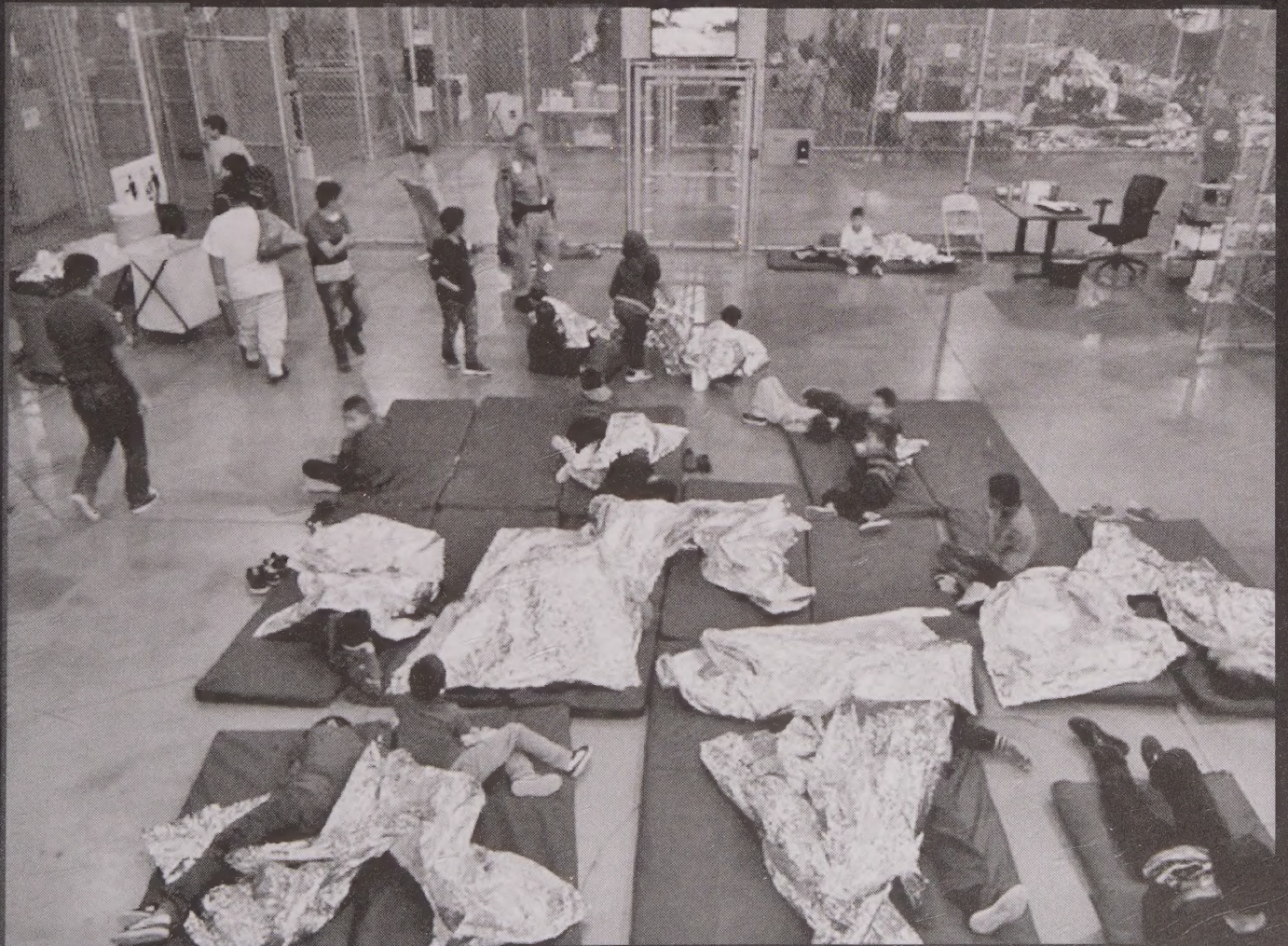


# What we would have done is what we are doing now

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# The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

Established 1842

The Inquirer is the oldest

Nonconformist religious newspaper

**"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."**

*From the Object passed at the General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, 2001*

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## Inquiring Words

Blessed are we who gather with open hearts, together, in this space, today.

Blessed are we: the chalice-lighters of resistance, justice, love, and faith.

Blessed are we: the heretics, the outcasts, the walkers of our own way.

Blessed are we: the border-crossers, the refugees, the immigrants, the poor, the wanderers who are not lost.

Blessed are we: the transgressors, the trespassers, the passers-by, the cause-takers, the defiant, the compliant.

Blessed are we: the hand-extenders, the sign-makers, the protestors, the protectors.

Blessed are we: the trans women, the trans men, the non-binary, the cisgender, the multigender, the no gender.

Blessed are we: the friend, the stranger, the lonely, the hidden, the visible, the authentic.

Blessed are we who rise in solidarity, blessed are we who cannot, blessed are we who do not.

Blessed are we for this is our Beloved Community, and this is who we are.

— Andrea Hawkins-Kamper

## What we would have done

When I've thought about some of the dark times in recent history – the Shoah, the fight for Voting and Civil Rights in America, the movement for equal rights for the LGBTQ+ community – I've assumed that if I were there I would be on the side of justice, that I would have protested and stood up and refused to cooperate with a persecuting state.

But honestly, if I think deeply about it, I don't know. I don't know if I would have been a 'good' German, or if I would have risked everything to save Jewish lives. I don't know if I would have followed the example of the Unitarian minister James Reeb. He marched with Dr Martin Luther King in Selma, Ala., and paid for it with his life – beaten to death by thugs.

*I don't know.*

And I must face the fact that the answer might be no. I may have fretted, read, complained, but not acted. I may have come up with scenarios, thinking if only I were presented with the right opportunity, then I could act. And I may have done nothing.

So when I read the title of Kate McKenna's recent sermon, 'What we would have done is what we are doing now', I knew I would find something in it and, perhaps *Inquirer* readers would too.

I am writing this a couple of weeks ago, before this issue of *The Inquirer* went to press. It is appearing on the weekend when Donald Trump is scheduled to be in London – as are thousands of people who want to protest his policies. I asked some Unitarians who planned to protest the visit to write about how their commitment to act relates to their faith. And they responded.

There is an argument to be made which holds that it is not for citizens of the UK to protest another nation's policies, that a democratically elected leader is only beholden to his people. Others may be happier if a Unitarian publication stayed out of politics entirely.

But what would our faith have us do, when children are caged and the US government uses scripture to justify it?

— MC Burns

## With thanks

I am back from a short break from editing *The Inquirer*. I did a little bit of travelling and a lot of relaxing. And I am happy to be back.

I want to thank the Inquirer Board, for giving me this much-needed time. I also want to thank Guest Editor Maud Robinson, Sub-editor Charlie Watson and all of the contributors who worked with Maud to create three fantastic issues of the paper. I am grateful.

— MC Burns



# How near must evil be for us to cry out?

By Kate McKenna

We are born with very few fears. As tiny infants we fear very little. But the one thing we fear as tiny babies is abandonment. And there are sound evolutionary reasons for that. We are born chemically intertwined to the person who bore us, and we very quickly, possibly through smell, become chemically intertwined with the other parent, if they're around. Our infant screams quickly become imprinted on our parents, in such a way that it's almost a biological impossibility for them not to respond.

Sometimes, children and their parents cannot stay together. Perhaps the parent dies. Perhaps the child dies. Sometimes a parent is unable to do what is needed to keep a child safe and well.

Previous to becoming a minister I worked in frontline child protection. And sometimes, although far less frequently than you might think, our team would be a part of having a child removed from its parent or parents. Sometimes it was an emergency: illness, or death, or a sudden realisation that the home was a very bad place for the child to be. Sometimes it was a longer process: parents who were consistently unable – for whatever reason – to parent their child. Sometimes it was temporary – hours, days – sometimes it was permanent.

It was always traumatic, for everyone: the child first and foremost, the parents, the professionals, those surrounding and supporting the family. Sometimes, of course, in the end, there were happy outcomes: the child was returned, or the child was found a loving adoptive family.

But removing a child was always traumatic. Because I never came across parents who didn't love their child. They all loved their children.

Lots of things happen if a child has to be removed from its parents.

Here is what never happens.

The child is never put in a cage.

Children are never, here, left alone to scream and scream because their parents have been taken away, and they don't know where they are, and they don't speak the language, and the staff in the place they've been taken to are forbidden from comforting them.

If that did happen here, if we heard that social services were doing that, if we heard that warehouses were being turned into massive dormitories, and that while children waited to be sent to those dormitories they were kept in cages – literally in cages – how outraged would we be?

We would be appalled. We would refuse to allow it to happen. We would write letters. We would go there. We would demonstrate. We would do everything in our power to make it stop.

If we heard that, somewhere near here, or in another part of Europe, children were being taken from their parents, put in cages, moved to detention centres, and looked after by people who were only allowed to touch them if they needed cleaning, or changing, or medical attention. If we heard that those children's parents were then sent back to where they came from, without the children, without any idea of where their children were, or any idea of how to contact them, what would we do?

And how near to us does it have to be for us to do something? Because we know that right now that very thing is



*A migrant detention facility holding children in McAllen, Texas. Photo issued by US Government (U.S. Customs and Border Control) via Wikimedia Commons*

happening in the United States. (Even after an order to stop the separations, families have not been reunited.) In a country that more or less shares our language. In a country whose history is intertwined with our own. In a country we think of as first-world, developed, civilised. Children are being ripped out of their parents' arms, watching their parents be handcuffed, they're being put in cages – I can't say this enough: they're being put in cages – and then they are transferred, alone, to detention centres.

They are being fed. They are being kept safe. They are reportedly clean, and safe, and warm.

But they've been putting children in cages.

Things have shifted slightly. There are children – and some of these are babies – still held in detention away from their parents. Away from any source of comfort. And what little change has happened – let's not forget this – is because there was international uproar.

And it's not over. It only takes a matter of hours to do the paperwork to deport an adult immigrant from the US. It takes very much longer to deport an underage immigrant from the US. So there are hundreds of parents who have been held in prison for two or three days – because illegally entering the United States is a very minor offence – and then sent home. But their children are still detained.

I don't care what you think about immigration or border controls or the need to detain or deport adults who migrate. I don't care. Because in these cases, that's irrelevant. What's relevant here is that children are being locked up far away from anyone who knows them.

They are locking up children.

There is no justification. I don't care where you are on the political spectrum: there is no justification.

Now, some of you may be thinking that this is about politics and that politics has no place in church. But it's not about

*(Continued on page 5)*



# Why am I protesting? I really do care

By Maria Connor

But we're a religious tradition, not a political organisation. It's not our business to comment on the policies of a foreign government. It's not as if it affects us... is it?

Underpinning much of the Unitarian view of life and faith is an awareness that humanity is connected – to the community, the global human family, and the natural world. What happens to one being affects every other in the web of existence. In the age of globalisation and international trade and economic activity, there's no country on the planet that is unaffected by events outside its borders. Nations around the world have a significant influence on each other – alliances, trade deals influenced by policy and government focus. When one country sets up unjust or exploitative policies without opposition, it sets a precedent for other countries tied to them and gives credibility to groups holding similar beliefs within other countries.

Choosing not to speak out is not a neutral action. If we are aware of injustice but don't do or say anything to oppose it, the rest of the world is likely to see one of two options: either we are indifferent to the situation and the human suffering caused, or we are on the side of the oppressor. This may not be true, but if we haven't supplied any evidence to the contrary, how can anyone know?

Global community – we look beyond our walls because there's nowhere where injustice and oppression are less wrong. A guiding principle of our faith – equality – holds that no group of people is less deserving of decent living conditions, fair and equal treatment, justice and freedom from oppression.

These beliefs make us Unitarians. But if human rights are being trampled on, if people are being treated in degrading and

dehumanising ways and the powers that be are making policy that serves the benefit of the richest 1% of the population at the expense of the most vulnerable people in society. And if they are keeping their hold on power by feeding the most vicious instincts and most bigoted sections of the voting populace, but we don't speak out because it's not happening here or we don't think that faith has anything to do with politics – then what are our beliefs good for?

Faith without works is dead – and we're inheritors of a long tradition of social justice campaigners, people for whom their faith was inextricably linked to their activism for a more equal world. And holding those beliefs was not enough – they took action according to their principles because the test of faith is how you live it out when you're not at chapel.

We speak so often of compassion and love in our services, but it becomes obscene to talk about love and compassion for humankind if we see children taken from their parents and sleeping on the floor of cages and we don't have sufficient empathy for these fellow human beings to stand up and say - *no more*. If the Unitarian commitment to equality, justice, respect and human dignity for every person everywhere is genuine, then when those values are under attack our faith bestows a moral imperative:

*Do something.*

I'm a Unitarian and I'm marching because I really do care. Do you?

Maria Connor is a member of the Octagon Chapel, Norwich.



## A lifetime of Unitarian values inspire

By Hephzibah Ramage

I live in Macclesfield, a market town in the North-West of England where I plan to join a protest against the policies of President Donald Trump. Some of my friends have asked why I am bothering to do this. And my question is, why are they not. I have never been apathetic in regards to issues that concern me or upset me and whilst I always thought I was not a political beast I am discovering that politics do matter to me as they should to everyone with the right to vote.

So why make a stand against a man from another country? Why protest in a town 200 miles away from his visit? I stand against Trump's visit to the UK because not showing my objections to his visit would be tantamount to condoning his right-wing fascist views. Here is a man who wants to strip his own countrymen and women of affordable access to healthcare, who advocates an extremist approach to immigration – despite the fact his parents were immigrants and four of his five children were born to immigrants. His views on gun crime are beyond logical reasoning and the way he treats and views women is appalling.

I thought saying why I am protesting would be easy but I am finding it really difficult to put into words exactly how strongly I feel about this narcissistic imbecile who has such influence and power in today's world. I feel sick to my core that this visit has been allowed to go ahead, as allowing him into the UK also says a lot about our current government and the fact that they are not prepared to stand against a man who conducts

himself in such an arrogant and disrespectful manner.

So, does this fit into Unitarian thinking then? Well, with the freedom of thought and enquiring nature of many Unitarians I would have thought that it is obvious that it does. Unitarians have stood against oppression, in the face of discrimination and have been leaders campaigning for tolerance for many years now so it is of course natural that I am protesting against Trump and all he represents today, historically and for future generations. I was a born a Unitarian and will always be a Unitarian but this is not why I am protesting.

I am protesting so that at no point in my son's future can the horrors of the prisoner of war camps be a reality, although I fear this may already be on our horizon. I want those I know and my local town to know that I vehemently oppose everything that Trump stands for and that I am disgusted that our government have been weak and feeble in not standing up against this excuse of a world leader. Will my protest be effective? I doubt it. But if those with passion and compassion don't stand up for what they believe in, then we live in a very sad world and you just never know what the power of like-minded individuals can achieve.

Hephzibah Ramage is a Unitarian living in Macclesfield.





# God is showing us himself in their faces

(Continued from page 3)

politics. It's about children. And even if it were about politics, what is church for, what is a minister for, if not to challenge injustice and cruelty?

And they are locking up children.

What is happening may be within the laws of the country where it's happening. But it is far, far, outside the laws of compassion. (It's also outside the law of the United Nations, and we know that the response to that was to withdraw from that bit of the United Nations.) It's outside the law of any scripture I can think of. The Bible – the words of Jesus – are being used to justify this, and they are being used wrongly. What is happening is outside of the laws of God, and outside the laws of the Jesus that some of us try to follow.

I don't believe in evil. But this is evil.

But is it too far away for us to really worry about? Why should we interfere in what's happening thousands of miles away? Don't we have enough issues of our own to deal with, and isn't this their problem?

No.

The world, these days, is tiny, and we hear about this stuff as it is happening. We can see it. We can read the reports from both sides – and bear in mind no one in the US government is even denying this – and we can hear it. Personally, I can't watch the footage, and I certainly can't listen to the recordings of the children, but it's all online, if you feel a need to hear it. We know it's happening.

And if we know it's happening while it's happening, then we can do something. And if we think – and we surely do – that this is a social, ethical, and religious outrage, then we must do something.

As religious people, or if not religious then surely ethically aware, we cannot just stand by. I know that, here, we have a huge spectrum of religious belief, but I also know that we are all good.

If you believe in the teachings of Jesus, ask yourself what Jesus would do.

If you believe in a God who intervenes in the world, ask that God to intervene, now.

If you believe in a God who is your moral guide, then ask for guidance on what you should do.

If you believe in none of those things but still believe in the power of humanity, then ask yourself what you can, and should, and must do.

And even though we are physically far away from it, there are things we can, and should, and must do.

Funds have been set up. Funds to pay for legal advice, to pay for phone credit so that parents can speak to children. Some of us, I know, may not be able to donate financially, but all of us can tell other people about that.

We can ask our leaders to write to their leaders and tell them that the world sees them, the world is watching what they are doing, and the world will not accept it. That pressure has begun to work, and it needs to keep working.

We can contact Amnesty International, who have picked up this campaign. (See: <https://bit.ly/2K3fmTA>)

If nothing else, read about it. Read intelligently. Read, and find out what's going on, and why, and how we can be part of stopping it.



*A protester against Trump Administration immigration policies at Whitehall in April. Photo by Alisdare Hickson, via Wikimedia Commons*

And if you're a person who's comfortable with prayer, then please do that. If you pray, this is a thing to pray about. Pray for these children, and their parents, and pray for the people making these policies, that they may see what it is that they are doing.

These children, and their parents, are God showing us himself. They say that if you want to know what you would have done at pivotal moments of history, particularly the darker ones, you only need to look at what you're doing in these sometimes overwhelmingly dark times.

What are we doing?

What can we do?

What will we do?

I'm going to end with a story.

Once, many years ago, the people of the world became tired of what they saw all around them. They had seen children suffering at the hands of adults, adults suffering at the hands of those who should have cared for them.

They had seen people die in pain and alone and frightened. They had seen war and famine and loneliness and misery and meanness and spite and gossip and cruelty. And try though they might, they could not make sense of how this could happen. They discussed it, and they debated it, and they fought about whose fault it was.

Eventually, they could see only one culprit. It was surely God's fault. And as one, they rounded on God, crying out 'Look, God, at the suffering of your people! Why don't you do something about it?'

And out of a deep, dark, long silence, God answered them, saying 'I did do something about it. I made you.'

Amen.

*The Rev Kate McKenna is minister with Bury Unitarians.*



# Faith and the art of protesting

By Ann Howell

When I lived in Montreal, Canada, one of my first big interactions with the Unitarian Universalist congregation there was attending a mass rally opposing George W Bush's continued warmongering in Iraq, which had cost the lives of tens of thousands of civilians by that point. I knew I had found my tribe when I saw that they were willing to put their values in action and proudly march as 'UUs against the war'. There was no debate within the congregation – they were large enough to have a thriving Social Action committee, who announced the march and invited anyone else who felt so moved to join them. In the end there were a couple dozen of us and we joined thousands of others in a show of raucous, but peaceful, solidarity.

The ramifications of doing nothing are too great. Directly after the Brexit vote, there was an upsurge of racial incidents around the country, and the tension was especially high in East London, where I was working at SimpleGifts, a Unitarian Centre for Social Action. On the bus, on the street – people now seemed empowered to shout racial abuse and verbally attack women in hijabs. Our local families, normally rather stoic, reported feeling shaken and upset that their children felt threatened. Although these tensions have eased somewhat, there is a definite sense that there is a new, higher 'tide line' and that a significant amount of progress has been lost. The one thing that didn't change, though, is SimpleGifts' positive interaction with the local community. The families knew that they

could count on the safe environment that SimpleGifts provides for themselves and their children, and this type of direct social action is an important way that we live our Unitarian values.

I plan to join at least a few other like-minded UK Unitarians in what promises to be a huge protest against the racist, misogynist, and classist policies of the Trump administration, as the president arrives for a visit. These policies go against the very heart of our Unitarian values of love, respect, and compassion and go beyond the boundaries of party politics.

We have an opportunity to stand together and show this country what kind of world we want to live in, and what kind of behaviour we will not tolerate. This type of protest and show of solidarity is yet another way we can show the world what it means to be Unitarian. If we truly believe in compassion and the inherent value of all people, then we should not be afraid to come together in defiance of an administration that aims to create division amongst the most needy for the benefit of the wealthy. If we can't get behind this kind of demonstration, then who are we really?

*Ann Howell is a member of the Lewisham congregation in London.*



## Respond to evil when it denies humanity

By Elspeth Parris

We are told that 'pride is a sin'. It doesn't make sense to me. But there is something there – it's just not what we necessarily mean by 'pride'.

We say 'she takes pride in her work' and we don't mean she's a 'jobsworth' but that she makes the effort to do the job well – she's the sort of person we want to see doing the job.

We say 'he takes pride in his appearance' and we don't mean he spends all day in front of the mirror ensuring that every hair is perfectly in place. We mean he bothers, to be clean and tidy, to wear clothes that suit, and fit him.

Clearly, we can use 'pride' as a word signalling virtue – so why is it said to be a sin?

Closely associated with 'pride' is the concept of 'self-worth', but that is a good thing too, the lack of it undermines many mental health problems.

The problem is an excess sense of one's own value as a human being compared to others: self-importance. And that is something Jesus did speak out against, particularly in regard to the priesthood of the time. And that is where I place the 'sin' of pride. Where we think that we are more important, more entitled, than others who we see as somehow undeserving.

When that sense of entitlement versus the 'undeserving' extends, not just to individuals but to whole groups, it underpins a reconstruction of society which excludes and demonises other whole groups: by wealth/poverty, by race, by religion. As long as the state takes a stand against such group entitlement, it can be kept under control. But when the state encourages it, it leads, simply, to fascism.

In the US, where racism has always been a problem, Trump

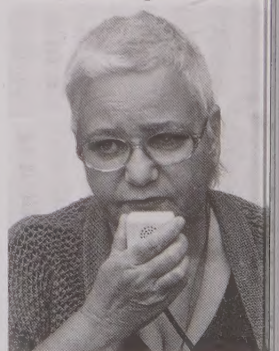
becoming President is, in this light, a disaster. Not because we would have supported the other candidate (I wouldn't) but because he supports, and is supported by, a group-entitlement which encourages seeing other people as undeserving, and indeed, non-human. He talks of immigrants 'infesting' America as if they were vermin. This is precisely where group-entitlement takes us. That then encourages further group-entitlement behaviour, specifically from white-supremacy groups.

And so, 'pride' when understood as excessive self-worth extends to group-entitlement, and if left unchecked, leads to the de-humanisation of any group counted as 'not-us'. This seems to me to be the greatest evil. At its extreme, historically, it has led to both the practice of slavery (justified at the time on the basis that black people were not truly human) and the Holocaust. As such in this understanding of 'pride', yes, I have no problem calling it a sin.

St Paul taught us to know good or evil by its fruits, its results. And here, the results of self-importance, of excessive self-worth have been shown to have the potential for the greatest possible evil – that of denying humanity to others.

And that is why, I will try, if I can (I'm disabled and live in deep countryside) I will get to the demonstrations against Trump.

*Elspeth Parris lives in Wales and is an online member of the All Souls Unitarian Universalist congregation of Tulsa, Oklahoma.*





# What have you done for your neighbour?

By Bob Janis-Dillon

I saw in the news once about a family that refused to feed one of their children. The reason they gave is that the child had been born, as luck would have it, in the family's regular supermarket, and not at home. They locked the doors on her, and told her she was not allowed in.

This little girl, a few years later, tried to sneak into her family home. Her parents put her in a cage for a few weeks, and then threw her out in the middle of the night.

There was some sort of public hullabaloo when people heard about this, and complaints were made. The authorities said that there was nothing they could do about it. They had a point: the family were already feeding other children at home, so it's not like they weren't good people. The parents suggested that their supermarket provide for the child's feeding – it's where she was already; why not give her some of all that produce? (The supermarket, as you'd expect, didn't take kindly to this argument).

When the little girl grew up, she was – shall we say – a bit odd. Many observers noted how right the family was to stick to their guns; clearly something was up with her.

Are you familiar with this news story? I'm sure you are. That family is the human family. Their child is the poor.

What are we to do about the global poor? Some say there are no simple answers to global poverty. They are correct. We have, however, figured out a way to fly people to the moon.

Some say that eliminating dire poverty is unfeasible. This is a familiar argument: it was used against the abolition of slavery, against the imposition of basic accommodations for the disabled, against social payments made to the elderly, and against national health care. When they say that something is unfeasible, they mean that it is expensive. I'm sure they are correct.

Some ask, why should we help? After all, what have we done to them? Yes, maybe the profits from the Opium Wars and the colonization of the world, and the Iraq and Afghanistan global petroleum cartels might be around in some form. But that was a long time ago. This view sees the past thefts of the poor's resources as an irrelevance, the present system of vast law enforcement agencies to protect those stolen resources as an inevitability, and any suggestion of future threats to those resources – even in the form of taxes – as an outrage. I guess it's true that we're a forward-thinking people. There's a reason for that. The question that faith asks, on the other hand, is not sophisticated. It is, in fact, painfully simple.

The question is this: what have you done for your family? What have you done for your neighbour?

*The Rev Bob Janis-Dillon is minister with the Merseyside District Ministry Association.*



## It's time to stand up and shout, 'No!'

By Art Lester

I haven't lived in the United States for 37 years, so I don't normally keep up with the news from over there. An exception was when Obama was running for president and each year's Super Bowl game. But since November of 2016, I have been glued to CNN as if it was a local station.

At first, Trump-watching was almost fun. Not really believing that he could damage my home country beyond repair, I used to cluck my tongue and forward particularly hair-raising news items to my friends, who would cluck back. Looking back on it now, I think I was waiting for a grownup to intervene and say, 'That's enough, now.' It wasn't until after his firing of FBI Director James Comey that I realised that there were no grownups, no teacher to report him to, and, horrifyingly, no rules.

I have relatives who support Trump. Like me, they grew up in the American South, but our lives took different turns. Last time I visited, I learned that they possess 37 firearms, including two assault rifles. They were careful – mostly – not to use the N-word, but their attitudes were clear. Just now I'm wondering whether I can bear to un-friend on Facebook someone I shared a mother with.

In a way, I suppose, they've done me a favour. They have made me realise that the awful virus of self-justifying hatred and bigotry is not just infecting Hillary's 'basket of deplorables', but even those we love.

Here's what I want to say to them: 'Look, don't you realise that every single trait your mother tried to warn you against – bullying, lying, bragging and scheming – are all exemplified in the man's

public and private demeanour? Would you be glad if your own children turned out that way?' But those words are meaningless against the promise Trump seems to offer: the rightness and the triumph of selfishness.

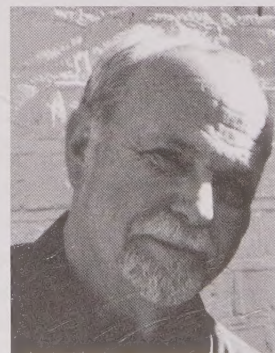
I hear from various sources that Unitarians should avoid politics. Even on its face, that statement is absurd. Unitarianism is political in its waters. When it thrived, it did so in open defiance of the status quo. The very fabric of our trinity – freedom, reason and tolerance – is what Trumpism is targeting. Some people believe – and I am one of them – that to remain silent right now is a political act.

The filmmaker Michael Moore said recently, referring to the TV series 'The Handmaid's Tale', that there must have been a moment when the terrible advance of fascism could be stopped by an alarmed citizenry. Voices in unison, saying 'No!' People with different ideas, normally contained within the cocoon of 'normal' politics, crying out a single word.

I don't know whether Trump will actually appear in London for his planned victory tour. If he does, the demonstration planned for that day offers a chance for all of us to clear our throats and our minds and say 'No.'

I'll be there.

*Art Lester is minister with Croydon Unitarians.*





# GA Executive Committee messages

1. Executive Committee Key Messages, 18 May 2018

## **1. Moving ahead with the Training and Education Development (TED) Project**

The Executive Committee received a progress report from the TED Project Governance Group, which had met on 25 April 2018. The first-ever orientation retreat had taken place in February 2018, as part of the transitional programme for Ministry training, and individual learning plans had been developed with the three incoming students. A proposal for bridging funding of £35,000 to ensure the delivery of the new programme and of an orientation retreat for those selected by the Interview Panel in January 2019 was presented and agreed. This sum also includes the budgeted legal costs of the establishment of the new Unitarian College Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The funding will be sourced from an unanticipated legacy and a recent £5,000 donation from a Chapel Trust for the new ministry training programme.

## **2. Retirement of the Chief Officer – Recruitment of a Successor**

The working group established at the last meeting reported on its work to develop the recruitment and selection process for a new Chief Officer, following the announcement of the retirement of Derek McAuley in April 2019. If required, support on specific tasks would be obtained from an external human resources adviser. It is planned that the job description, person specification and process will be agreed at the July meeting of the Executive Committee and the post will then go out to advertisement. The Executive Committee also noted that provision for the costs of the recruitment process, and of any overlap during a handover, would have to be built into the budget for 2018/19 to be agreed in September 2018.



## **3. General Assembly Roll of Ministers**

We are pleased to announce that the Rev Claire MacDonald, (right) having completed the academic requirements of her training, has been admitted to the Roll of Ministers with Probationary status.



## **4. Safeguarding**

The Executive Committee considered the Alert on Safeguarding issued by the Charity Commission on 5 April 2018 and reinforced the need for all congregations to consider carefully the adequacy of their arrangements to protect people, not simply vulnerable beneficiaries like children and young

people. Actions were agreed for the safeguarding arrangements of the General Assembly for its own activities and services to be reviewed.

The results of the audit of safeguarding in congregations carried out in late 2017 were received. The response rate had improved from 38% to 51%, yet this still meant that nearly half of congregations had not returned the audit form. The responses to specific questions showed a high degree of compliance on basic policy issues, but with more to be done on liaison with groups that might use Unitarian church premises and making sure congregational committees regularly had safeguarding on their meeting agendas.



*Unitarian General Assembly President Joan Cook with representatives of the Hindu, Muslim and Spiritualist faith communities, at the dedication of the National Memorial to British Victims of Overseas Terrorism.*

## **5. Presidential Duty**

Mrs Joan Cook, President of the General Assembly, was in attendance at the Dedication of the National Memorial to British Victims of Overseas Terrorism held on 17 May 2018 at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall, joined the family members of those killed by terrorist acts overseas to dedicate a new national memorial called 'Still Water'. Created by artist Alison Wilding and sculptor and maker, Adam Kershaw, it invites visitors to the site to interpret and draw their own personal connection to the memorial. Joan had the opportunity to talk to Prince Charles and representatives of other faith and belief groups.

## **6. New GA Youth Co-ordinator/Safeguarding Lead**

The Executive Committee was pleased at the appointment of Gavin Howell (right) as Youth Co-ordinator/Safeguarding Lead who would be starting with the General Assembly on 1 August 2018.





# Three ways to be our authentic selves

A young woman offered to share the reading that opened the morning meditation I attended the other day. Just before she began she admitted she was feeling hesitant. She was afraid she might stumble. I said, 'Do not worry if you stumble. We all stumble. And even if you do fall, we will catch you. Sometimes we all fall, but we are in this together and we can all hold one another up, encourage each other to rise again and – if really needed – we can pick each other up. We do not sail this ship alone.'

It seemed a little early for such words to be coming from my mouth, it felt like they were coming from another place.

As we sat together in silence, I recalled the many times in my day I stumble. I also remembered how many times I had fallen, and how often others held and encouraged me to rise once again. I have been blessed by so much love in my life. I have known so many people who have had faith in me, even when I had none myself. How do I know this? They have shown me so, in their loving works, through their loving example, through their humble human being.

Following the reading we sat together in silence, as we always do. Paul's letter to the Corinthians came to mind – particularly those words on Love and the three keys he says remain: 'Faith, Hope and Love'. I thought to myself, are these three the key to me? Somewhere in the soul of me came an answer. Yes it was three things but three slightly different ones to Paul. It came to me that the three keys are 'Being real, living in love and doing your job.'

What do you think about these three? Maybe you could consider three of your own. There's some homework, for those who like it. (Send your three in to *The Inquirer*, perhaps: [inquirer@btinternet.com](mailto:inquirer@btinternet.com) – ed.) I'm going to attempt to explain what I mean by these three: 'Being real, living in love and doing your job.'

## Be real

Whatever we believe about life, ourselves, the world – and whatever we believe about what is at the core of it all – it is vital that we are sincere about it. This is what it means to be 'real', to live authentically.

Sincerity is no easy thing. It is not easy to be sincere about who we are, to show the world ourselves as we are, to live as we truly are 'warts and all and beauty spots too'.

There is a phrase I often hear in spiritual communities that irritates me. It is used as an attempt to get people started. But I find it unhelpful and potentially quite damaging in the long term. It goes something like, 'You've got to fake it to make it.' I have found the opposite to be true. In my experience if you attempt to fake it you will never make it. I suspect that the most unspiritual thing a person can be is insincere.

If you attempt to fake it you won't truly make it. Just because it rhymes, doesn't make it true.

The key is authenticity, being real, being honest, living by faithful uncertainty – giving it an honest go, no matter how many times you falter, stumble and even fall.

To live with sincerity, with authenticity, is to truly be who you are. Our world needs us to live authentically. It needs us to truly be who we are, warts and all and beauty spots too. It needs us to be unafraid to let others see us stumble and fall, because in so doing we encourage others to be unafraid to be who they are. We need to expose who we truly are to give

From nothing  
to everything  
by  
Danny Crosby



ourselves fully away to life and encourage others to do the same. We then may just begin to create that kin-ship of love right here, right now. We just may begin to live in love and be able to do our job.

This is what it means to be real. By being real we can begin to live in love and in living in love we can begin to give our whole selves to life and begin to do our jobs.

## Live in love

One of my favourite hymns is 'Let Love Continue Long', particularly this line: 'Let love continue long and show to us the way; and if that love be strong no hurt can ever have a say.' It is inspired by one of the fathers of Universalism Hosea Ballou. (No relation to that bear from *The Jungle Book*, with whom I am told I share some qualities.)

Love is 'more than a feeling', as the group Boston once sang. To live in love is to act in certain ways. It is to live in certain ways with one another. It's about living by the "Golden Rule" of compassion 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you.' It is non-discriminatory. It is impartial. It is about giving of our selves, wholly to others. It's about being our authentic selves and encouraging others to be their real selves and welcoming them as they truly are.

## Do your job

When the Book of James says, "Faith without works is dead", living in love, impartially is the actual works. It's about helping to create that kin-dom of love right here right now, which in my view is doing my job.

Living in love is about living faithfully and hopefully with one another and with ourselves. It's about stumbling along through life accepting that you will trip on many occasions and sometimes fall. It's about encouraging one another to keep on and from time to time to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves down and start all over again. And, when we can't, to ask for help and let someone pick us up and encourage us to walk on once again.

This is doing our job, our loving work, to encourage one another whenever we stumble and fall.

You cannot do your job unless you are being real, living authentically and doing so in love, without partiality.

To do "your job", to live faithfully through your works, is as much about how we do what we do as what we actually do. It begins with the little things too.

It is your love that will show through your works and this is what it means to be real. This is authentic love, the real work of life.

*The Rev Danny Crosby is minister at Urmston and Altrincham.*



# Splendid vision from Ipswich to Auckland

Before he died, the Rev Phillip Hewett submitted this book review to *The Inquirer* and was keen to share it with fellow Unitarians. On page 11, opposite, Alan Ruston offers a reminiscence of Phillip's writings and notes that this last article of Phillip's to appear in *The Inquirer* is more than 73 years after his first.

**By Phillip Hewett**

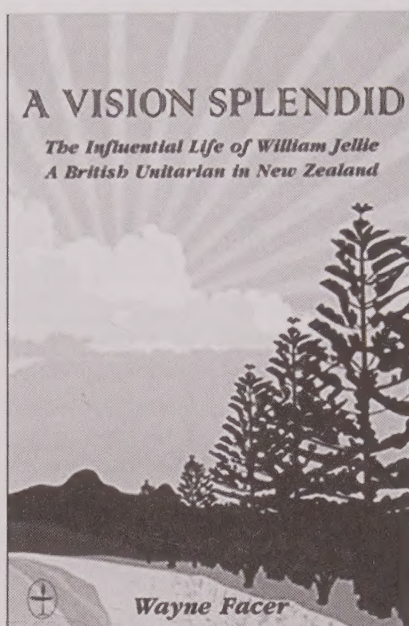
The fascinating story of Unitarians in New Zealand has hitherto been accessible only in fragmentary and scattered forms, but this gap has now been largely filled by Wayne Facer's book *A Vision Splendid* (Blackstone Editions, 2017 ISBN 978-0-9816402-6-6). The subtitle announces it as *The Influential Life of William Jellie, a British Unitarian in New Zealand*, and Jellie's life was indeed influential. He went to Auckland in 1900 as the first regularly settled minister in the country, and the spectacular success of his ministry is reflected in the official census figures, which showed an increase of over a thousand Unitarians during this period.

But this book is more than simply a biography. The author writes in his Introduction: 'A biographer is also a historian, trying to place the subject in the context of a certain time and place. A life must always be seen within its context.' He takes this precept very seriously. One entire chapter does not even mention Jellie, dealing instead, as other chapters do to a somewhat lesser extent, with persons and social movements which will have influenced his outlook, notably his tutor Philip Wicksteed, Fabian socialism, the Labour churches and the Domestic Missions, with their Unitarian connections. It was at a Domestic Mission in London (Stamford Street Chapel) that Jellie served for his first six years of ministry.

This was followed by three years in Ipswich before his move to New Zealand. What prompted such a move to the other side of the world? Facer's conjecture is that it was 'the reputation New Zealand had in the minds of many regarding its progressive social reforms.' At any rate, Jellie found himself at once very much at home in his new setting and within two years had raised the money for a church building and had it designed and completed. In the nature of the case, the routine activities of congregational life do not lend themselves to extensive description in a biography, but the growth of the congregation speaks for itself. He was an eloquent preacher and lecturer; in the latter capacity he drew crowds through his extensive knowledge of English literature, and is credited with providing New Zealanders with a first acquaintance with the great works of Dante.

He participated also in the social life of his congregation, leading rambles, picnics and camping expeditions. On his travels around the country he made a point of visiting isolated Unitarians. In 1906 he married Ella Macky, a member of his congregation. He rapidly became acquainted with many of the leading figures in the political, social and cultural life of the country.

This would not have been a difficult process. Although during the half-century before his arrival there had been only



a few hundred Unitarians in New Zealand, a remarkable number of them had risen to positions of leadership. Prominent among them was Sir Robert Stout, who had been at one point Prime Minister and was now Chief Justice. In accordance with his policy of providing full contextual information, Facer provides information about many of these fellow-Unitarians in his meticulous and comprehensive notes, which, together with appendixes and bibliography, take up nearly half of the book. There is thus a compendium of information about the whole of the Unitarian movement in New Zealand, before, during and after Jellie's time.

With the Auckland congregation flourishing, Jellie judged in 1910 that he could move to Wellington and rescue the floundering congregation there. This had

emerged a few years previously, erected its own building and been served by a minister from England with whom it had unhappily soon found itself at loggerheads. Jellie did not intend this as a long-term settlement, but as part of a process of Unitarian growth throughout the country, passing on the ministry in Auckland to a fellow-Irishman, Richard Hall.

It was at this point that he became acquainted with a man who was to become a good friend and colleague. This was James Chapple, whose colourful career found a place in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, as Jellie's did not. His thinly fictionalised experiences also provided the theme for an award-winning novel, *Plumb*, by his grandson Maurice Gee. He had been a Presbyterian minister in a suburb of Timaru, on the South Island, when he was summoned before a heresy trial for his radical theological and political preaching. Such trials usually took place behind closed doors, but he had insisted on a public hearing, before acceding to the demand for his resignation. He carried a majority of his congregation with him and set up a Unitarian church, which soon had its own building. Jellie visited Timaru the following year, and preached to a congregation of 270. 'A vision splendid' was Chapple's phrase (taken from Australian poet Victor Daley) and referred to the ideal he and Jellie shared of a progressive social order which would be Unitarian in religion and socialist in politics.

After three years in Wellington, Jellie, together with his wife and two small children, decided to return to England, apparently without definite plans, but events rapidly overtook him with the outbreak of war, and he became minister at Southport in Lancashire. Wartime conditions did not encourage congregational growth, and this was an interim period before their return to New Zealand in 1921. By this time Jellie was sick and depressed, and he was unable to work for the better part of two years. Then he undertook the less demanding ministry in Timaru.

But as he entered his 60s he was giving thought to his future. He had already gained a reputation as a lecturer on a subject he loved, English literature, and he now returned to Auckland

(Continued on next page)



# Phillip Hewett, *Inquirer* correspondent

By Alan Ruston

Cliff Reed's appreciation of the remarkable Unitarian life of Phillip Hewett (*Inquirer*, 24 March) takes us back to 1949/1950 when he was the dynamic President of the Unitarian Young People's League. However, that is not the only activity Phillip undertook that year. In 1949 he was about to enter Manchester College Oxford to train for the ministry having just completed a degree. That was a signal year in the life of the College.

The plan of Manchester College Council, nearly all well-known Unitarians, was to sell the College buildings to St Antony's Foundation for £216,750 and attempt to transfer much of the money to the Unitarian College Manchester. It seemed clear to them that only one college was required and that Oxford was not the place to have it. Although one of the prime movers of the sale was the then-editor of *The Inquirer*, nothing about it had appeared in its columns before the decision to be taken by the College Governors on 21 June 1949.

Phillip was the only incoming student that year but he and members of the Junior Common Room decided to take action themselves. He organised the fast preparation of a three-page letter which went to all ministers and congregations on the roll of the Unitarian General Assembly, asking them to express their views very quickly. The response was overwhelmingly against the sale, and this action helped, in just a few weeks, to change perceptions so the College was not sold. *Inquirer* editorials fumed but they could do nothing and several members of the College Council resigned.

Phillip, I have just discovered, wrote for *The Inquirer* at the tender age of 19. Looking for something else I recently came across the issue of 29 July 1944 where an article titled 'Religion in the Forces' appeared written under his full name of APB Hewett, which stated he was in the RAF. He argues that Unitarianism should attract those in the Forces in this time of war, concluding 'we must find some means of putting forward a reasoned exposition of our principles and of the practicability in the modern world of a life based upon them, rather than those of a cut and dried orthodoxy.'



Phillip Hewett (left) and Alan Ruston along the pilgrimage route at Montserrat where they attended the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists conference in 2005.

We are still engaged on that search, but what is remarkable is that Phillip was still having his writings published only months before his death. That is in excess of 73 years – which must be a record – and he continued to read *The Inquirer* when he could. Even James Martineau in the 19th century could not match this span. A remarkable man indeed who wrote so much in support of the Unitarian message he espoused for so long.

Alan Ruston is a Unitarian historian and a member of the Watford Fellowship.

## 'Vision Splendid' is more than a biography

(Continued from previous page)

to spend the next 15 years lecturing under the auspices of the Workers Educational Association (the 'poor persons' university'). From time to time he returned to his old pulpit when the church was without a settled minister. By this time

the fortunes of Unitarianism had changed, and its membership had reverted to the 19th-century levels.

When I became minister in Ipswich, more than half a century after Jellie left, I persuaded the congregation to send him a message of greeting, which reached him as part of the many congratulations on his 90th birthday. In his warm acknowledgement he told us that he was still able to tend his beloved garden and orange grove. He had another eight years yet to live. Much later, on a sabbatical spent in New Zealand, I was able to meet with his widow, Ella, and also with David Chapple, another grandson of James. Their legacy had not been forgotten, and Wayne Facer's book will perpetuate its memory.

The Rev Phillip Hewett, a Unitarian minister, served congregations in Ipswich and Vancouver, Canada, where he died earlier this year.

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# Lewisham deepens community giving

By Claire MacDonald

We say that Lewisham is a place where sacred and social meet. When I came here as minister in October 2017 I was drawn partly by the community's commitment to social change and social justice. The large Edwardian villa in south London where we meet has an upstairs flat with four residents, three of whom are former asylum seekers. I knew of Lewisham's response to the refugee crisis through the work of Lori Winters, who manages the rentals. I had also worked on social change and food justice with Ann Howell, former Director of SimpleGifts. I knew the Lewisham congregation wanted to give as much as we were able to. And yet we are small, and we have limited capacity. So how *do* we stand, week by week and month by month, with the work of others to whose work we are committed?

Yes, we can write letters and go on marches, but last December we also decided to take the risk of giving our congregational collection each month to a different charity, instead of to chapel funds. This was at time when we had little extra money and were applying for grants to keep going, to make our space safe and secure and to pay a minister. And yet making the commitment to give to projects whose visions and values we support, has been nourishing in ways we could not have imagined, and it has taken us, to our surprise, to our next step as a worshipping community. In other words, it has fed us, by allowing us to share more deeply and widely, both our money and our values, and to stand with others, deepening our own commitments and values as we support what they do.

Each charity has been suggested to us through a connection to someone in the community itself. We began by giving to White Helmets in Syria, and then we gave to an LGBT charity, the Rainbow Trust in Northern Ireland, then to the local Young Women's Hub in Lewisham, to SimpleGifts and to a local ME charity and in June we supported Unseen, the charity committed to ending modern slavery. We are on our way to giving more than £2000 over the year to projects for change.

What we have realised through this practice of attending to projects and finding out about them, is that we now want to engage more deeply with the issues raised by the work of charities and projects, to understand how their values meet our own, to learn from the stories that their work reveals, and to strengthen support for our own community's capacity for



*Claire MacDonald, along with Lewisham members, celebrates installation of the congregation's Peace Pole.*

connecting spiritual understanding and social justice. At the same time as we are supporting social change charities, we wish to welcome into our space community projects that also stand for social justice. We now welcome the local branch of the London Renters Union, as well as Buddhist meditation and yoga. The path we are choosing, in collaboration with other Unitarian congregations such as New Unity, is marked by a commitment to sharing, connecting and reaching out.

The decision that whatever financial condition we are in we can always give to other projects has allowed us to see that we always have something more to give and that we can explore the relationship between social change projects and spiritual well being more deeply. Between September and December we plan to return to the work of Unseen and to the issue of modern slavery as a modern crisis of deep human spiritual concern. We will work with what this means to us for three months as an experiment, with café events and speakers. We know that others do this, and would like to hear from you, to collaborate with you, to have you talk to us, and to hear about how you work with social projects, and we will report on what happens.

*The Rev Claire MacDonald is minister with Lewisham Unitarians.*

## The Inquirer

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